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Keng Yaik: Gerakan happy with PM's stand on Islamic country

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today said it was encouraging that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had clarified the Umno-helmed Barisan Nasional's stand on Malaysia being an Islamic country.

"We are pleased the Prime Minister used Gerakan's forum to start a discussion that Malaysia is an Islamic country," Dr Lim said.

Yesterday, when opening Gerakan's 30th national delegates conference, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and BN chairman, said: "Umno wants to state clearly that Malaysia is an Islamic country."

He also said it was Pas' hope that when Umno declared Malaysia as an Islamic State the latter's non-Muslim component parties in the coalition would oppose it.

"Although Islam is the official religion, followers of other religion are given the opportunity to practise their faith," he said in his winding up speech at the close of the conference.

Dr Lim said although there were civil laws in the country, there was also syariah law for Muslims.

He said there were some pro-Pas civil servants who were not doing their duty as they were guided by their personal beliefs.

As his first example, he said, as a Minister he approved some allocations to some temples and churches but these officer "finds it very difficult to approve."

"He is being brainwashed that it is against his religion and that if he approves anything for other religions he will not go to heaven.

"So if that kind of thing happens, we have to put in place what sort of country, way of life and attitude Government servants should practice in order not to build up misunderstanding and divide the people," Dr Lim said.

Asked to clarify his statement, he said: "There are some cases. However, if (they are) isolated or one or 10 or 100, I don't know but there are this kind of cases"

Asked who had brainwashed these officers, he said: "To me it is the Pas people."

As his second example, he said in the Education Ministry there were officers who were not doing enough to help Chinese and Tamil schools although the schools were part of the national education system.

Dr Lim said priority was set at upon Independence to promote the national language to unite the people and to build a common language.

He said this had gone on for many years and that after the Education Act 1996 was passed, both Tamil and Chinese schools had become part of the national education system.

"Some officers in the Ministry of Education might be quite reluctant to build facilities and training teachers for these schools as they perceive it as going against the national language policy," Dr Lim said.

Although Pas was being "wishy-washy" about certain matters in the hope of fishing for votes, the people, especially the non-Malay society, would not fall for it.

"They (Pas) are totally wrong altogether. Everything is being monitored, everything is being discussed and everything is being debated," he said.

Dr Lim said he had last year offered to give up his ministership to concentrate on party matters but recently the party's central working

committee had asked him to stay on.

"I cannot go on for long," he added.

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